

swingin' the blues



WITH

KETER BETTS

HENRY BUTLER

JOE COHN

JIMMY LOVELACE

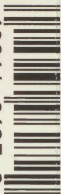
BOBBY WATSON



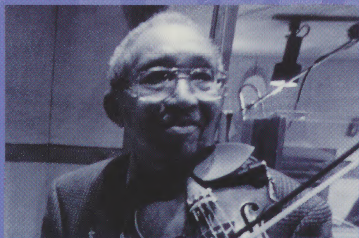
claude
williams "fiddler"

*swingin' the blues***"fiddler"**

0 18964-9627-2 2



Produced by Russ Dantzler and Scott Billington • 24 bit mastering from direct-to-2-track analogue recording



Claude "Fiddler" Williams is a living national treasure, a jazz pioneer who remains a vital interpreter of the swing tradition. One of the few violinists to achieve prominence in jazz, Claude plays with a gritty, hornlike-sound which is instantly recognizable. Some seventy years after his initial 1929 recordings with Andy Kirk's 12 Clouds of Joy, here is Claude swinging with panache and offering ever-inventive playing, supported by a group of New York's finest musicians and the New Orleans pianist Henry Butler.

Keter Betts acoustic bass, music direction
Henry Butler piano
Joe Cohn guitar
Jimmy Lovelace drums
 Special guest: **Bobby Watson** alto saxophone
Claude "Fiddler" Williams violin, vocals

- 1 **The Preacher** 4:11
- 2 **Things Ain't What They Used To Be** 6:51
- 3 **Somewhere Over the Rainbow** 4:19
- 4 **A Smooth One** 6:30
- 5 **Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You** 4:46
- 6 **I'm Just a Lucky So and So** 10:04
- 7 **Moten Swing** 6:06
- 8 **These Foolish Things** 4:05
- 9 **One for the Count** 8:12
- 10 **There Is No Greater Love** 7:11



- 1 The Preacher 4:11**
(Horace Silver/Silhouette Music, ASCAP)
- 2 Things Ain't What They Used To Be 6:51**
(Mercer Ellington/Music Sales Corp., ASCAP)
- 3 Somewhere Over the Rainbow 4:19**
(Harold Arlen-E.Y. Harburg/EMI Feist Catalog, Inc., ASCAP)
- 4 A Smooth One 6:30**
(Benny Goodman/Ragbag Music Publishing Corp., ASCAP)
- 5 Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You 4:46**
(Andy Razaf-Don Redman/Michael H. Goldsen, Inc.-The Songwriters Guild, ASCAP)
- 6 I'm Just a Lucky So and So 10:04**
(Duke Ellington-David Mack/Polygram International-Paramount Music Corporation, ASCAP)

- 7 Moten Swing 6:06**
(Benny Moten-Ira A. Moten/Sony Tunes, Inc., ASCAP-APRS, BMI)
- 8 These Foolish Things 4:05**
(Harry Link-Eric Maschwitz-Jack Strachey/Boosey and Hawkes, Inc., Bourne Co., ASCAP)
- 9 One for the Count 8:12**
(Frank Smith/Bearsongs, PRS)
- 10 There Is No Greater Love 7:11**
(Isham Jones-Marty Symes/The Songwriters Guild-Music Sales Corp., ASCAP)

Keter Betts acoustic bass, music direction

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Bobby Watson alto saxophone

Claude "Fiddler" Williams violin, vocals





It is routine for writers and historians to deal with the activities, appearances and recordings of artists who were active in the 1920s or 30s. It is sometimes necessary, even desirable to attempt to determine the thought processes of artists where no written record of their behavior exists. Often the “why” of a decision is more important than the “what,” the “where” or the “how.” Who knows what the difference in music history might have been if Jelly Roll Morton had gone to New York, instead of Los Angeles, in 1917? How would the careers of some of the great New Orleans jazzmen been changed if King Oliver had sent for a trumpet player other than Louis Armstrong to join his Creole Jazz Band in 1922?

The point of all this is that while the writer is accustomed to dealing with personalities of this period, it is decidedly not normal to be dealing with someone of that vintage in the present tense. As we near the end of the

20th Century, there are few still active who were professional jazz musicians in the 1920s. Among the ones who come to mind are Benny Carter, Lionel Hampton and the gentleman who made the music captured on this disc, Claude “Fiddler” Williams.

Claude was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma on February 22, 1908. By his late teens he was working as a musician with the Doc Pettiford band. This band was run by the father of bass giant Oscar and worked out of Oklahoma. The core of the group was the large Pettiford family, including Doc’s ten children. Family bands of this nature were not unusual during the 20s and 30s. Lester Young began his career working in a band run by his father and including other members of his family.

In late 1927, he joined the group of trumpeter T. Holder. A legendary territory band of the 20s, Holder’s band evolved into the 12

Clouds of Joy, fronted by Andy Kirk. Holder worked out of Tulsa but with the change in leadership, Kansas City became Claude's next home. Claude made his recording debut with the Kirk band on their Brunswick recordings of November 1929. Upon leaving Kirk, Claude gigged around Kansas City playing a little banjo and guitar as well as violin. He also worked with the celebrat-

ed Kansas City bands of George E. Lee and Alphonso Trent.

Much of 1934 and 35 were spent in Illinois working with Chick Stevens and Eddie Cole. It was Count Basie who called him back to Kansas City to join him at the Reno Club. Claude would play rhythm guitar but there would be solo space for him on violin.



< **Joe Cohn**

“Lady Be Good” and “St. Louis Blues” were two items in the early Basie book that featured Claude. When the band pulled out of Kansas City in October of 1936, headed for Chicago, Pittsburgh and New York, Claude Williams seemed to have everything going for him. What Claude Williams didn't realize was that his ability and the vision of John Hammond, the writer and mentor to Basie, would come into conflict.

While Claude was a part of the first Basie Decca session in January 1937, he was gone before the next one in March. Hammond had recommended replacements for two trumpet players and the first alto player as well. Yet in Claude's case it wasn't a question of musicianship. Hammond had decreed that only Basie would solo from the rhythm section. Claude's replacement was Freddie Green who played only guitar and did not solo.

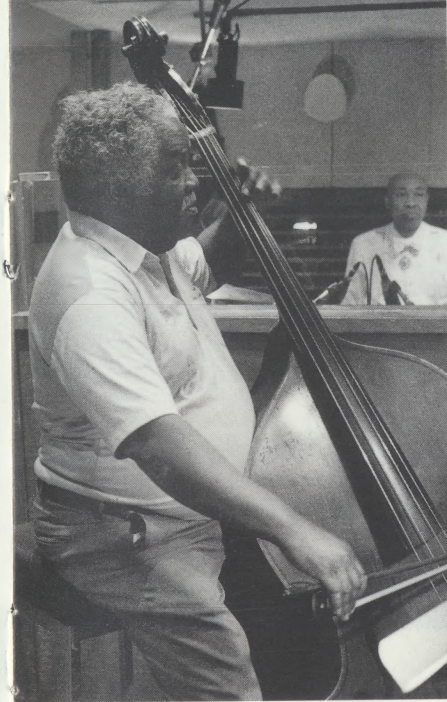
< **Henry Butler & Claude Williams**

One might think to look for Claude Williams on the same career scrap heap as the other recently departed members of the original Count Basie band, yet he managed to find work and also to build a following back in Kansas City. He led his own group, the Swingin' Strings, for about a year.

As the Kansas City scene began to recede behind the political collapse of local boss Tom Pendergast, Claude found greener pastures in Michigan and Illinois. The 40s and early 50s found him working with groups such as Four Shades of Rhythm, the Austin Powell Quintet and the Roy Milton band. A return to Kansas City followed in 1953 and for the next decade Claude was a regular around town leading combos of various sizes. Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson was a member of different Williams combos during this time. Claude occasionally worked with Jay McShann in the mid-50s. Things began to slow down in the mid-60s: Claude did a lot of free-lancing and spent time in

both Denver and Las Vegas. Things were so bad that even Jay McShann was down to a duo. Yet Claude joined the duo of McShann and drummer Paul Gunther in 1971 playing violin, guitar and bass!

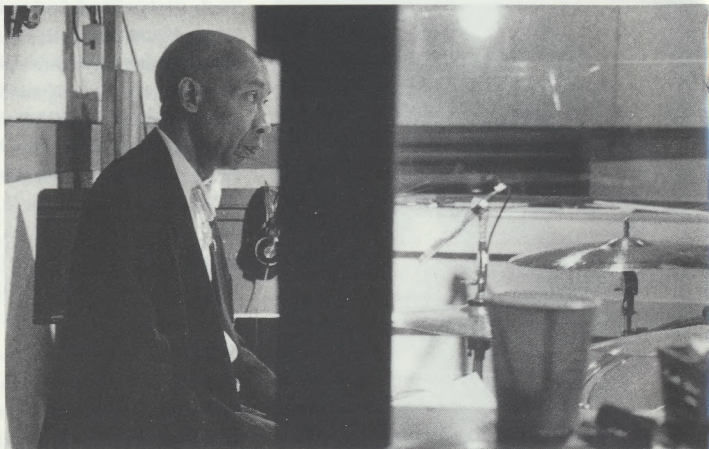
It was John Norris, co-owner of Sackville Records, who heard an expanded McShann group in Montreal in 1971, who set the wheels in motion for Claude's return to the limelight. The Sackville album *The Man from Muskogee* by McShann featured Claude and was released in 1972 to instant, international critical acclaim. Thirty-five years after being let go by Count Basie, the final great soloist of Kansas City jazz had emerged, seemingly from out of nowhere, fully formed.



Keter Betts ^

While Claude continued to work with McShann regularly until the mid-70s, he was becoming more active as a leader. He toured Europe on a regular basis and was recorded by a host of different labels: Steeplechase, Black & Blue, Arhoolie and Progressive among them. He joined the cast of *Black and Blue*, the revue that starred Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins and Carrie Smith, in Paris. By the time he reached seventy years of age Claude "Fiddler" Williams had been accepted by the jazz community as a premier performer.

While Claude has recorded with a variety of different musicians, this is his first time with Henry Butler. The blind New Orleans pianist is one of the most versatile jazz performers. When he first came to prominence in the mid-80s, he was presented as a hard bop combo leader. Since that time he has stretched out in a number of directions: as a vocalist, as a blues soloist/accompanist and as a more roots-oriented stylist. Trying



Jimmy Lovelace ^

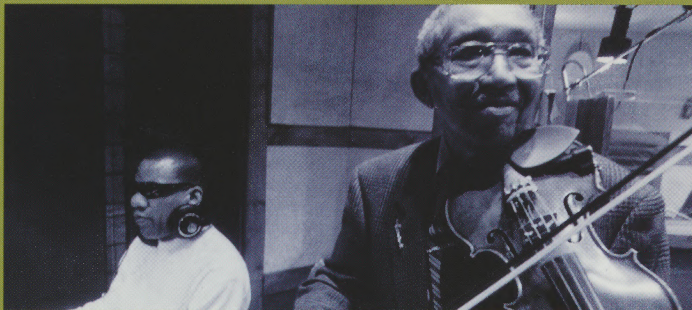
to pigeonhole Henry Butler and to describe the range of his abilities is probably a hopeless task.

Guitarist Joe Cohn has been playing professionally for almost twenty years. For some time, he lingered in the shadow of his father, Al Cohn, a great saxophonist and arranger. His involvement with the Al Grey Quintet, where he doubled guitar and flügelhorn, provided exposure and brought him to the attention of a wider audience. He has played with Claude frequently on New York area gigs. As for the others, Keter Betts

and Jimmy Lovelace have seen virtually everything at one time or another and have played most of it. Bobby Watson adds his Carteresque alto to "These Foolish Things" and "A Smooth One."

The music Claude Williams plays here is not that far removed from the music he played during his earliest, formative years. There is a swing revival abroad in the land and young people are learning to dance to music that their grandparents heard for the first time many years ago. Claude Williams still plays that music with the stylistic integrity of someone present at the creation.

Bob Porter



Produced by Russ Dantzler &
Scott Billington.

Recorded direct to 2-track analogue
tape by Jim Czak, assisted by
Bill Moss, April 26 & 27, 1999, at Nola
Recording Studio, NYC.

Mastered to 24 bit digital by
Laurie Flannery at Northeastern Digital
Recording, Southborough,
Massachusetts.

Photography by China Jorran.

Design by Angelynn Grant.

Notes by Bob Porter.

Dedicated to a great gentleman of the
jazz piano, Charles "Red" Richard.

Special thanks to Blanche Williams,
Chuck Haddix, Chip Deffaa, Matt Glaser,
Lise Curry and Julie Lyonn Lieberman.

Artist booking & information:
Hot Jazz Management
212-586-8125
hotjazz@idt.net

<http://soho.ios.com/~hotjazz/HOTJAZZ.html>



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1. Name of this recording?

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- a. Bluegrass/Country g. Latin
 b. Blues/R&B h. Reggae
 c. Cajun/Zydeco/New Orleans i. Rock
 d. Children's j. Singer/Songwriter/Folk
 e. Irish k. Tex-Mex
 f. Jazz l. World

3. What influenced you to buy this recording?

(please check all that apply)

- a. Ad in newspaper
 b. Article or review
 c. Display in Store
 d. In-store listening station
 e. Radio
 f. Cover art
 g. Recommended by a friend
 h. Long-time fan
 i. Live performance
 j. Other _____

4. Where do you buy music?

(please check all that apply)

- a. Record Store f. CD/Record Club
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 c. Book Store h. Mail Order Catalog
 d. Dept. Store i. Internet
 e. Concert

5. What three magazines do you read regularly?

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b. _____
c. _____

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- a. _____ b. _____

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(for mass demographic use only)

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 b. \$10,001 - \$25,000 e. Over \$75,000
 c. \$25,001 - \$50,000

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Address _____

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Email address _____

Gender Male Female Date of Birth ____/____/____

claude "fiddler"
swingin' the blues



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Ⓢ 4957

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

1. The Preacher 4:11
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Used To Be 6:51
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Rainbow 4:19
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